

FROM THE EDITOR



In the minds of many clinicians the management of patients infected with HIV has a narrow focus involving antiretroviral therapies, high-tech laboratory monitoring, and so on. In the field of medicine generally, and in the field of HIV medicine in particular, this approach falls short of the mark. The broader issues of a more holistic approach to the comprehensive management of the patient are highlighted in this issue of the *Journal*.

In an excellent review on the nutritional management of HIV patients Steenkamp and Dannhauser (p. 31) make the

point that there is a significant risk of nutritional deficit at all stages of the disease and that this can compromise the function of the immune system. They provide a practical approach to deal with nutritional management in different settings; at the level of basic care, when limited resources are available, and lastly in the optimal setting. They make specific recommendations regarding each of the stated goals of nutrition support, namely prevention of protein energy malnutrition, immune system support, preservation of gastrointestinal function, and improvement of psychosocial well-being. It should also be remembered that patients who are going onto antiretroviral agents need nutritional advice, in that many of these agents have specific accompanying dietary requirements and many have adverse effects on gastrointestinal function.

Guidelines for palliative care (p. 15) benefit from a new expanded definition for the discipline. Health care professionals are frequently guilty of shedding responsibility for the care of the patient, with an attitude of 'there is nothing more that can be done'. These guidelines will, it is hoped, empower health care professionals to provide a caring and humane approach to their patients, particularly those in end-stage disease.

The challenges of providing a community-based home-care programme are outlined in an article by Dr Laura Campbell (p. 9), who has outlined experiences emanating from Port Shepstone Hospital and the South Coast Hospice team. Their experiences, recommendations and ongoing review process provide a template for other similar national programmes.

DES MARTIN

Editor, Southern African Journal of HIV Medicine
President, Southern African HIV Clinicians Society

